COMMUNITY SERVICES & ENVIRONMENT **Agenda Item**
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL **No. 6**

1 September 2014

Recycling and Contamination

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Cllr Jeavons - Environment and Transport

Executive Summary:

This report updates the Scrutiny Panel, on the current levels of recycling contamination following the previous report regarding the campaign to reduce this across the borough.

The report details:

- The tonnages of waste sent for recycling.
- The tonnage of residual waste.
- The percentage of material rejected as non recyclable by the council's contractor at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF).
- The number of bins not emptied due to contamination.
- A small trial looking at doing things differently to help residents recycle correctly.

Reason for scrutiny:

To update on the issues around recycling contamination.

Recommendation:

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the report be noted.

Background papers:

Reports to Scrutiny Panel on 28 March 2013 and 10 October 2013.

Resource and legal considerations:

Contamination levels in excess of 5% may pose contractual and financial issues for Walsall Council.

Citizen impact:

There is no impact to residents who use the service properly. Residents can access education and advice on how best to recycle, but those who continue to contaminate their recycling bins risk not having the bin emptied.

Environmental impact:

Recycling is better for the environment than disposal and complies with the Waste Hierarchy. The Waste Hierarchy is a classification of waste management options in order of their environmental impact. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then other recovery such as energy recovery, and last of all disposal (for example landfill). EU legislation requires local authorities to meet a target of 50% of waste being recycled by 2020. Walsall's recycling rate for 2012/13 was 40.4% and for 2013/14 an improvement was seen, with an outturn of 42%.

Performance management:

Contamination has a big impact on the recycling rate. To meet the target of 50% of waste being recycled by 2020 a continued focus on contamination is required.

Equality Implications:

None

Consultation:

The Clean and Green Encouragement Team work with collection crews and respond to residents requests for assistance. Enquiries from residents via the Contact Centre, information from collection crews and experiences of the Encouragement Team are taken into account when deciding the best approach to reduce contamination and how to support the needs and requirements of individual residents.

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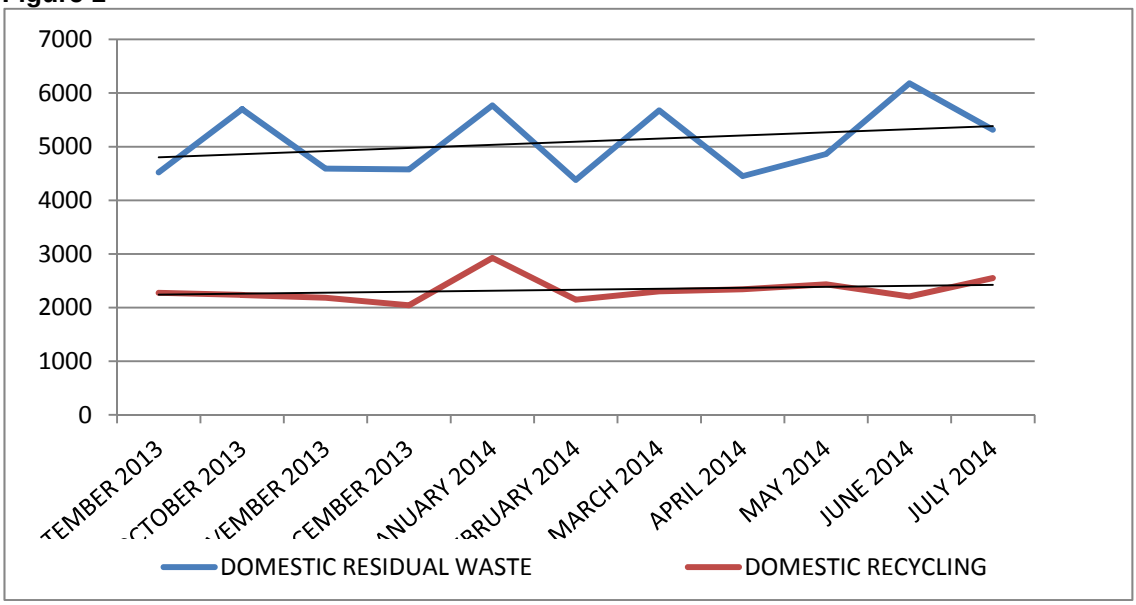
Report

1.1 The tonnages of residual waste and recycling from September 2013 to July 2014 are shown in Figure 1 below and can be seen in more detailed tabular form in Appendix A to this report.

Figure 1

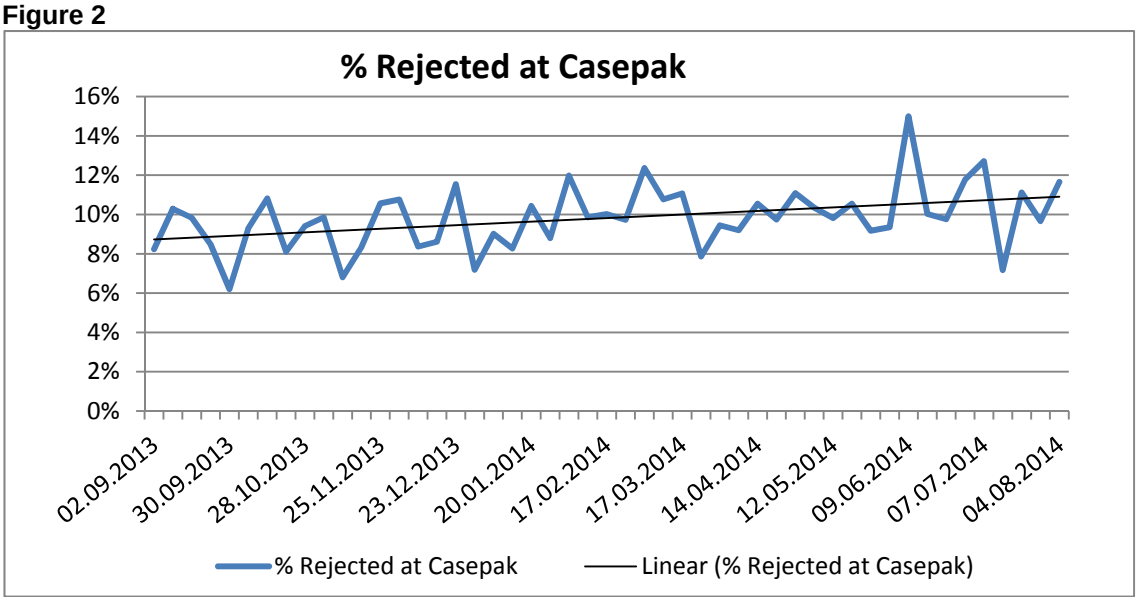


1.2 As shown in Figure 1 it can be seen that the tonnages of both domestic residual waste and domestic recycling have increased in the previous 11 months. There is a greater increase in the quantity of residual waste collected than in recycling. These figures indicate a general increase in total waste arisings.

1.3 There were expected variations in recycling tonnages collected over the Christmas period.

1.4 The percentage of material rejected as non recyclable by the council's contractor at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) from September 2013 to July 2014 is shown in Figure 2 and shown in more detailed tabular form in Appendix A.

Figure 2

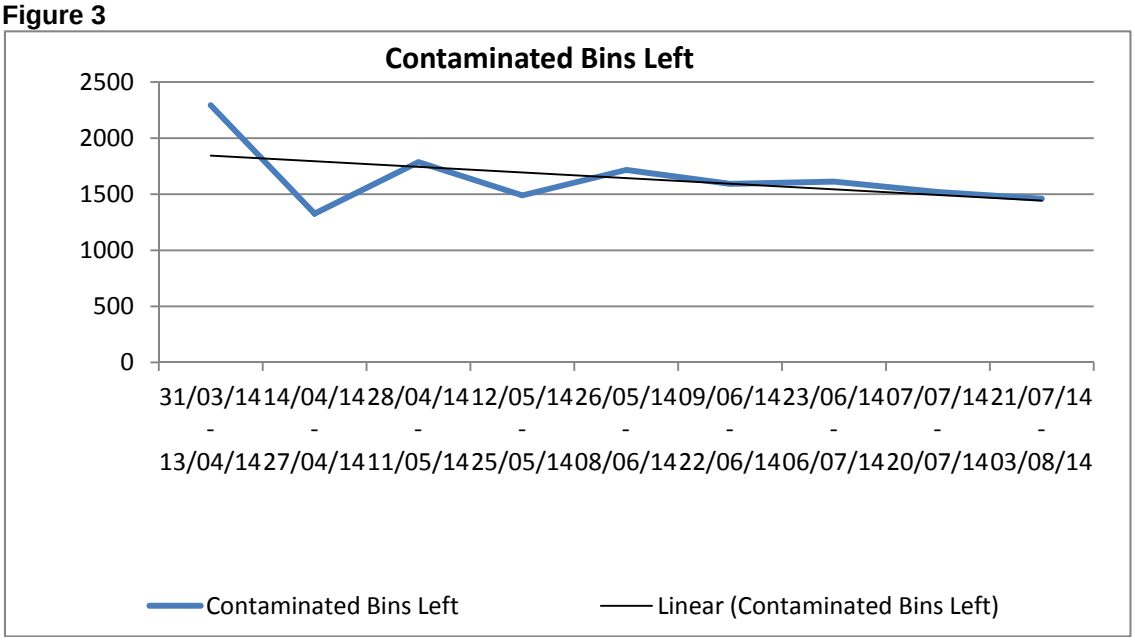


1.5 Figure 2 illustrates that the percentage of contaminated recyclable material delivered to the MRF has increased during this period from c. 9% to 11%. This data is collated on a weekly basis from a quality sampling regime and subsequent analysis of the recycling materials.

1.6 The current upward trend in contamination continues to be of concern because levels in excess of 5% result in contractual and financial issues for the Authority. The income received per tonne of material is based upon the level of contamination and reduces as the level increases. The issues are being managed closely by Clean and Green with support from Legal Services and Finance.

1.7 The number of bins not emptied due to contamination for the period April – July 2014 is shown in Figure 3 below and in more detail in Appendix A.

Figure 3



1.8 The report dated 10 October 2013 explains that the number of bins not emptied due to contamination stabalised to the historic level of around 2,000 bins per collection cycle. Figure 3 above shows this figure to be decreasing. The average number of bins left during this period is 1644 per collection cycle (see Appendix A).

1.9 Figures 2 and 3 above illustrate that the number of bins not emptied has reduced but the levels of contamination identified at the MRF is increasing to unacceptable levels. A number of factors may be contributing to this effect, for example;

- Genuine misunderstanding by residents of what to put in the green bin and what should go in the grey bin. The most common contaminants are textiles and food waste, which should both be placed in the grey bin.
- Complacency from residents
- Complacency from crews
- Incorrect materials not visable via the surface check carried out by crews.

Doing Things Differently Trial

2.0 Working with residents has shown that a different approach is required. The Recycling Encouragement Team, front line staff and colleagues from Business Change have looked at different ways of delivering effective recycling education and encouragement.

2.1 The current working practices mean that on collection day if a recycling crew reject a contaminated bin it is stickered and the resident has to wait until next collection day for the bin to be emptied. The resident will often call the Contact Centre to clarify why the bin was not emptied. A recycling encouragement assistant may then visit to provide advice and assistance, but residents may still have to wait for the bin to be emptied. This causes a great deal of dissatisfaction and makes it difficult for the education team to encourage participation.

2.2 Learning from this experience, a small scale trial involving collection crews and supported by Business Change, has been developed to improve the customer's experience, provide education and encourage participation. The trial commenced on Monday 2nd June 2014 and is scheduled to finish on Friday 29th August 2014.

2.3 The trial consists of 1000 properties per week borough wide. The collections at these properties are being delivered in a different way with a crew and vehicle making two visits on the same day.

2.4 Recycling bins are emptied on the first visit in the morning and the crews empowered to educate and provide assistance to residents regarding correct disposal of materials.

2.5 Residents are either spoken to, or literature left stating what action the crew have taken. If the crew encounter minor contamination they will advise the resident how the item should be disposed of, correct the mistake and remove the waste. If the crew encounter major contamination they will again advise the resident but not empty the bin at the first visit.

2.6 In the afternoon the same crew makes a second visit to empty the grey residual bin. Contaminated green recycling bins, not emptied on the first visit, are now emptied.

2.7 The crew records the properties that have presented minor and major contaminated bins.

2.8 Once recycling education has been given, adequate support provided to the resident and if no improvement is evident, then the resident can be informed in advance that the bin will not be emptied at the next collection should contamination continue.

2.9 The Recycling Encouragement Team are available to provide additional support and education for residents if required.

2.10 The trial is expected to deliver the following benefits;

- A more customer friendly approach, causing less animosity and improving the council's image.
- A larger resource delivering education and assistance at a local level and on a regular basis.
- Enabling the Recycling Encouragement Team to focus on residents who persistently present contaminated bins.
- Greater ownership and participation from the crew in reducing contamination.

2.11 The results of the trial will be evaluated to determine if any changes can be made on a larger scale to improve recycling rates and resident participation.

APPENDIX A

The tonnages of residual waste and recycling from September 2013 to July 2014 are detailed in the table below.

MONTHLY TOTALS	DOMESTIC RESIDUAL WASTE	DOMESTIC RECYCLING
SEPTEMBER 2013	4519.75	2272.85
OCTOBER 2013	5698.52	2234.91
NOVEMBER 2013	4589.73	2183.87
DECEMBER 2013	4575.04	2042.37
JANUARY 2014	5768.79	2925.22
FEBRUARY 2014	4378.24	2146.98
MARCH 2014	5678.68	2302.53
APRIL 2014	4450.69	2341.40
MAY 2014	4861.40	2434.64
JUNE 2014	6180.99	2205.89
JULY 2014	5315.63	2551.00
TOTALS	56017.46	25641.65

The percentage of material rejected as non recyclable from September 2013 to July 2014 is detailed in the table below.

September 2013		October 2013		November 2013		December 2013		January 2014		February 2014	
02.09.13	8.23%	30.09.13	6.20%	04.11.13	9.86%	02.12.13	10.76%	30.12.13	7.19%	03.02.14	11.98%
09.09.13	10.29%	07.10.13	9.30%	11.11.13	6.80%	09.12.13	8.37%	06.01.14	9.02%	10.02.14	9.86%
16.09.13	9.83%	14.10.13	10.82%	18.11.13	8.34%	16.12.13	8.61%	13.01.14	8.27%	17.02.14	10.02%
23.09.13	8.48%	21.10.13	8.11%	25.11.13	10.57%	23.12.13	11.54%	20.01.14	10.44%	24.02.14	9.73%
		28.10.13	9.41%					27.01.14	8.80%		
March 14		**April 14**		**May 14**		**June 14**		**July 14**		**August 14**	
03.03.14	12.37%	31.03.14	9.45%	05.05.14	10.35%	02.06.14	9.35%	30.06.14	11.78%		
10.03.14	10.77%	07.04.14	9.20%	12.05.14	9.82%	09.06.14	15.00%	07.07.14	12.72%		
17.03.14	11.07%	14.04.14	10.55%	19.05.14	10.55%	16.06.14	10.03%	14.07.14	7.17%		
24.03.14	7.86%	21.04.14	9.74%	26.05.14	9.17%	23.06.14	9.76%	21.07.14	11.12%		
		28.04.14	11.09%					28.07.14	9.66%		

The number of bins not emptied due to contamination from April to July 2014 is detailed in the table below.

Date	Contaminated Bins Left
31/03/14 - 13/04/14	2294
14/04/14 - 27/04/14	1327
28/04/14 - 11/05/14	1786
12/05/14 - 25/05/14	1489
26/05/14 - 08/06/14	1716
09/06/14 - 22/06/14	1592
23/06/14 - 06/07/14	1613
07/07/14 - 20/07/14	1519
21/07/14 - 03/08/14	1460
Total No. of contaminated bins left	14796
Average bins left per Collection Cycle	1644